

Early responses to the Elgin Police Department's efforts to obtain a new canine officer have been very encouraging, according to Chief Dennis Parr. The City of Elgin recently submitted a \$9,000 grant request to the Justice Department for the purchase of a "drug sniffing dog" under a project Elgin has titled "SNARL" -- Stop Narcotics at Rural Levels.

Matching fund requirements will necessitate Elgin raising one half the grant amount, or \$4,500, so an ambitious fund raising effort has been launched throughout a four-county area. Plans call for utilization of the animal, as needed, in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Umatilla Counties for drug enforcement, tracking, search and rescue, officer protection and other such activities.

Although grant monies are not expected to be awarded until early February, Elgin hopes to raise contributions or pledges for the matching funds by that time as well so that, if the endeavor is successful, the dog can be on the job by April. Should the grant request be rejected, Chief Parr will continue efforts to raise necessary funding from private resources.

Parr notes that donations are being requested from businesses, civic organizations and private individuals throughout the four counties. Several such organizations have already voiced their support and pledged funds, he said. In addition, the Oregon State Police are actively supporting the program and plans are underway for a benefit basketball game which will pit the State Troopers against a combined team from the Elgin Police and Fire Departments.

The Elgin City Council has also pledged its support of the police department's campaign as it recognized the community's concern about the growing drug problems in Eastern Oregon.

Anyone wishing to donate contributions or pledges to the effort may send them to "SNARL" -- c/o Elgin Police Department, P.O. Box 128, Elgin; or they may be left at the city office, Elgin Community Center. Representatives are also available to speak to organizations and explain the project more fully. Requests should be directed to Chief Parr at 437-9771.